

Rocky Mountain Big Horn Sheep

at Highland Hi School



Photo — courtesy U.S. Forest Service
Bighorn or Rocky Mountain sheep, southeastern Utah
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BIGHORN is the wild sheep of North America. Its horns curve backward from the forehead, down, and then forward. The largest horns on record were on a bighorn ram killed in British Columbia. These horns measured 4 feet 3 inches (1.3 meters) along the front curve, and spread 31 inches (79 centimeters) apart.

Male bighorns stand from 3 feet 2 inches to 3 feet 6 inches (97 to 107 centimeters) high at the shoulder. Old rams weigh from 200 to 300 pounds (91 to 140 kilograms). The ewes are not as large. These wild sheep do



by Edward Hoppe for WORLD BOOK

The Bighorn Sheep of Alaska and the Yukon Territory, called Dall sheep, are the smallest wild sheep in America.



Talley N. Nelson

Bighorn Sheep of the Rocky Mountains live in the highest parts of the mountains. Elastic pads on the bighorn's feet grip the rocks and absorb the shock of the animal's gait.

not have wool as domestic sheep do. Instead they have a coat of hair similar to that of a deer.

There are three kinds of bighorns, known as the *Rocky Mountain sheep*, the *Dall sheep*, and the *Stone sheep*. The Rocky Mountain bighorns live on open slopes of the Rocky Mountains and Sierra Nevada from southeastern British Columbia southward to northern Mexico. In the northern mountains, these sheep are dark grayish-brown. In the hot mountains of the desert country far to the south, they have coats of pale buff. All the Rocky Mountain sheep are creamy-white on the lower parts of their bodies, and have patches of the same color on their rumps. The Dall sheep live in much of Alaska, and in the western part of Canada's Yukon Territory. These sheep are white. The Stone sheep are found from the south-central part of the Yukon Territory to central British Columbia. Their color varies from dark brown to black. The Dall and the Stone sheep are more lightly built than the Rocky Mountain sheep, and have slender horns with graceful curves.

Bighorns make their homes in the highest parts of the mountains, where human beings find it difficult to go. They live in bands numbering as many as 60 animals. The lambs are born in the spring. The ewes usually bear one lamb at a time, but sometimes have twins. In the Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado, the ewes can sometimes be seen urging their lambs to jump from one rock to another. Lambs two or three weeks old can go wherever their mothers go. Bighorns jump and climb easily in dangerous places. They escape wolves, coyotes, and other enemies by racing to heights far above them. Bighorns are equally sure-footed when they plunge at great speed down steep slopes.

Bighorns feed on grasses and other small plants. They also eat the tender twigs of bushes.

Many bighorn sheep have been killed by big-game hunters, who prize the heads as trophies because of their great horns. Stock-grazing and diseases have also cut down the numbers of these wild sheep in the United States and southwestern Canada. Mountain lions and



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BIGFOOT is a humanlike creature said to live in the Pacific Northwest. It has been reported most often in the mountains of California, Oregon, and Washington, and of British Columbia in Canada. Canadians call the creature *Sasquatch*. Bigfoot stories resemble those about the abominable snowman, a hairy beast said to live in the Himalaya in Asia (see **ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN**).

Hundreds of people have reported seeing the bigfoot or its footprints. They describe the creature as standing from 7 to 10 feet (2 to 3 meters) tall and weighing more than 500 pounds (230 kilograms). Like an ape, it has thick fur, long arms, powerful shoulders, and a short neck. It supposedly walks like a human being and leaves huge footprints about 16 inches (41 centimeters) long and 6 inches (15 centimeters) wide.

Evidence of the bigfoot's existence has not been sufficient to convince most scientists. In 1967, a photographer took a short movie of what he claimed was a bigfoot in northern California. But experts do not agree on exactly what the film shows.

J. R. NAPIER

COUNTRY:

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Photo by John Best



Herald photo/Rod Collett

Bighorn sheep occupy high mountain areas of the West.

LEIDY = *Mt. in Hi' Wintahs*

Sitting somewhat obscure and unnoticed toward the northeast corner of the Council is Leidy—12,013 elevation. He inherited his name from Professor Joseph Leidy, an astronomer, who came to these parts in 1871 with Prof. Wm. Cope of Yale on expedition to seek and study the fossil remains of prehistoric animals.

Though he stands an unlucky number over the conventional 12,000 feet, he helps to balance Bald Mountain with a 53 feet deficiency, on the extreme west end of the Council.

Leidy has a big role with his corner on the corner. Intrinsically, it is a very interesting and indispensable role.

Most of his drainage is to the north through Carter Creek and its tributaries. Looking beyond Carter to west and north Leidy can see Sheep Creek whose waters nourish the community of Manila. Should we follow this water down through its lakes, meadows, parks, reservoirs, canals and canyons—continuing after it hits the Green to Browns Park—the meaning, the beauty, the history of this corner, could be ours for keeps. This cannot be done in a line or a page. Nor in a trip, nor in any short period of time. We might say that no one person would ever be able to absorb it all.

First it is named from the many Bighorn sheep that were wont to run there through the seasons. This alone suggests rough country. "We might go through the prosaically named Sheep Canyon, one of the least known but most remarkable geological and scenic features in Utah. Geologists say this is one of the finest textbooks for studying the earth's geological history. Certainly it is a place of weird and unusual beauty." The sheep are rarely seen but elk, deer and beaver are common residents, with a few moose added thereto.

Beginning high in this Creek's basin, we note Spirit Lake with a legend all its own. Thomas Lake, Round Lake, Round Park, Daggett Lake, Weyman Lake and Weyman Park, Hickerman Park, Sheep Creek Park, Half Moon Park, with many smaller lakes and Parks, make up a paradise to roam in.



BIGHORN SHEEP

Art by Clark Bronson. Courtesy Utah State Department of Fish and Game

Leidy asked that Agassiz have Hayden ring the bells in 1881 when a road was made through his country to Fort Thornburg on Ashley Creek, near Vernal, Utah. "In 1882 a contract was let to carry freight from Carter Station on the U.P.R.R. by way of Fort Bridger to Fort Thornburg. In May 1882 Wm. A. Carter started with 22 six-mule teams and wagons. Three weeks later after much work in snow and mud the freight was delivered (with help of oxen).

This road was used for a few years transporting troops and hauling copper ore from the Dyer mine in Little Brush Creek, on South slope.

The road came up Birch Creek, then down Beaver Creek to its confluence with what is now known as Carter Creek where a cabin was built. This gave the Creek its name. It was tough going from this point to top of the mountain, going by Young's Spring. It finally made its way to east side of Ashley Fork over Taylor Mountain into Ashley Valley.

Again the bells rang as the life of Cleophas J. Dowd was snuffed out near April 11, 1897 at the hands of Charles Reaser, who worked for Dowd. So we get the name of Dowd Hole in Sheep Creek.



Census finds low number of lambs and dwindling number of adult bighorns in San Juan.

State is trying to find out why San Juan bighorns are dying

By Joseph Bauman
Deseret News environmental specialist

Rare desert bighorn sheep are dying in San Juan County, and the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources is trying to discover why.

In the Needles District of Canyonlands National Park, several dead bighorns were discovered beside the Colorado River this summer by river runners. They were south of the confluence with the Green River.

"We are very much concerned about it," said Pete

Parry, Canyonlands superintendent. "We are doing all the monitoring that we can of the situation."

One biologist says three adult ewes were found dead together. Bighorns usually die when very young or old, but these were in their prime years.

Outside the park, a mysterious plague seems to be hitting even harder.

So far, the greatest drop in bighorns is in what the DWR calls its North San Juan Unit -- along the Colorado River at Cataract Canyon, from Dark Canyon north

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SHEEP

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to the boundary of Canyonlands National Park.

During the annual fall census of big-horn lambs, conducted by helicopter, 40 or 50 lambs per 100 ewes is considered good. The break-even level is about 25 per 100.

In 1984, biologists tallied 22 lambs per 100 ewes in the North San Juan Unit.

"Last year it was 12 lambs per 100 ewes," said Jim Karpowitz, the DWR regional game manager in Price. "And this year it was zero."

During a helicopter survey in mid-November, the division could spot only 36 of the rare bighorns in the whole North San Juan Unit. Normally, about 100 are seen.

In the South San Juan Unit, which includes all of Red and White canyons, spotters found 125. There the disease — whatever it is — has been making inroads too.

Biologists guess that they normally see only about a quarter of all bighorns during helicopter surveys. Assuming that, the North San Juan Unit's bighorn population has dropped from 400 to 144.

"The numbers are definitely down on North San Juan. Three years of poor lamb production — that has to show up," said Karpowitz, who is in charge of the division's Southeastern Region.

He said he would not call it a big dying off. Instead, "what we've had is two or three years of poor lamb production."

If the lambs die before adulthood, obviously they can't replace the population.

"We suspect the lambs may be dying of one of the soremouth diseases," he said. This disease is common to all ungulates — hoofed mammals.

Just as the name implies, the disease makes the animals' mouths sore. Lambs can't suckle well, and die. Ewes get sores on their udders from the lambs' mouths.

Adult sheep can die because of the difficulty in grazing. "Soremouth usually is not a real serious disease in livestock, but in wildlife it could be very serious," Karpowitz said.

"Whether it's been transmitted from livestock or not, we don't know."

This is the third year of poor lamb production in the North San Juan Unit and the second in the South San Juan Unit. "So we suspect it's worked its way into there," he said.

In the Needles District of Canyonlands, this is the third year of trouble for lambs.

"We've done some pregnancy testing, and they're getting pregnant all right. We believe the lambs are being born, but they're dying soon afterward."

Biologists will have trouble identifying the disease unless they can find a fresh bighorn sheep carcass or a live sheep suffering from the disease.

In Canyonlands, biologists in a helicopter set out to capture such a bighorn. "But we didn't see a sick live one," Parry said.

Tom Bunch, a Utah State University associate professor of animal, dairy and veterinary science, flew in a helicopter over the Needles District in

September, trying to find out what was happening.

"We flew for about six hours in a helicopter and didn't find anything at all," except for two rams running together. Ordinarily, "we wouldn't be surprised to see 60, 80, 100 sheep."

A blood sample from the ram is being analyzed by the Desert Bighorn Sheep Institute in Desert Palm, Calif.

The deaths could be from the bighorn's natural boom-and-crash cycle. "They start to build up in various areas in number, and then they crash. And it's usually associated with pneumonia," Bunch said.

At this point, nobody knows the cause of the strange drop in bighorns in the North San Juan Unit and the Needles District.

"We don't know whether it's some kind of disease or what it is," Parry said.

Meanwhile, transplanted bighorn populations are doing well in the San Rafael Swell and San Rafael Reef of Emery County. Also, transplanted sheep near Escalante and Arches National Park are thriving. A native herd on Canyonlands' Island in the Sky plateau is doing well too.

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Howard still finds no